

PLANNING SUMMER RESORTS

by

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PLANNING SUMMER RESORTS

INTRODUCTION

I have chosen summer resorts as my subject because I have a definite interest in their development and maintenance; also because I feel that there is a growing need for more thought, more consideration of public taste in planning new areas.

I have found no books dealing directly with the subject; it seems that resorts have not been planned but have been the natural evolution of man's interest in scenic areas. I have read several articles concerning resorts in recent magazines or technical journals, but most of my material is taken from my own experience and from conversation with resort owners.

I first became interested in resorts when I visited them as a boy and enjoyed their benefits. Later during my summer vacations while attending high school I worked in Estes Park, Colorado (the gateway to the Rocky Mountain National Park). My work was not in planning or develop-

ing but in serving the people who visited the resort, so that I learned some of the things other people looked for in selecting a place to enjoy their vacation. After high school I was active in the actual building of cottages and business enterprises in Estes Park. Thus I got my first experience in dealing with the planning of resorts in general. I also made several trips through some thirty or more of the states, visiting other resort areas and studying building plans. Four years after graduating from high school I entered Kansas State College and took up the study of architecture, continuing to work in Estes Park during the summers. During the past seven years while teaching at the University of Minnesota I have spent my summers visiting resorts, inspecting sites, and searching for prospective locations.

Thus I have studied the subject from the attitude of patron, of proprietor, of architect and contractor. My study of the subject has not been brief because I have worked with it during the summers of twenty years as well as in spare time.

PURPOSE

To Show the Necessity of Planned Resorts

Summer resorts are not new, but we do need new summer resorts. This may sound a little dogmatic, but I do not mean that our summer resorts are as much out of date as they are inadequate. We need more and better planned resorts; more resorts near population centers and better plans to provide for maximum comfort and sanitation.

Let me explain why I think more resorts are needed. The high tension we are living under; the stress of business arguments; the exactions of high pressure salesmen; the strain of driving in traffic, with its maddening stop and go -- all these are forcing us to decide whether we wish a nervous breakdown and a short business life or regular vacations. Doctors no longer need to tell us to take life easier; during recent years the American people are reserving more and more time for recreation. They are finding that the physical buildup and the mental rest that they obtain from a week's relaxation out of doors are well worth the sore muscles and sunburn with which they return.

Formerly only the "boss", the wealthy, or honeymooners visited the resorts, because they were expensive, exclusive, and difficult to reach. But now our entire mode of living is changing and vacations are the rule rather than the exception; most people of moderate means are including a vacation, or at least a few weekend trips in their yearly budget. Today, nearly every family has a car; the highways are good in all parts of the country and numerous gasoline companies are competing with each other in extending free map service to the vacationist and traveler. Bus travel, since it follows the same highways, is preferred by many to driving their own car; and for people without cars bus travel forms an economical means of transportation to and from the resorts. The railroads are also helping the people to better vacations with lower fares, tourist sleepers, air conditioned trains, and fast service, thus leaving more time for recreation.

The work program is also instrumental in increasing the number of people able to take vacations. In order to relieve unemployment extra help is hired to take the place of employees on vacation, and the vacations are staggered

so that one person will supplant several different people during a season. Employers are willing to give more vacations if their force is not curtailed by doing so; at the same time they employ more people. Aggitation for shorter working hours is also leading to more time for recreation.

Granted that people need and are having more time for vacations, let us see where they will go. Most people taking vacations cannot take trips abroad because the average vacation is short, about two weeks, and people who have only a short time will go as close to home as possible. Thus resorts are needed most near centers of population since such places provide the largest group of vacationist. Many people even who have longer vacations are apt to stay in their own country as they feel that time spent in getting passports, checking baggage, changing money etc., is wasted as far as recreation is concerned. Those who occasionally go abroad will probably spend many summer vacations near home or in other parts of their own country; moreover people from other countries are coming to the United States in increasing proportion. The exact place people choose for their holiday will depend on their health and on what their vacational hobbies are; whether they pre-

fer hiking, fishing, golf, swimming, or sun bathing. Thus the resort that furnishes the most types of recreation pleases the most people and caters to families in which tastes vary.

It is obvious that more people need and are taking vacations; that more people have cars; that there are better highways and more adequate travel information; that bus and railway travel is faster and cheaper; and that more people are staying in domestic resorts than ever before. All these things contribute to the overtaxing of housing facilities in our national parks and in better known resort areas. Resorts are crowded and are turning people away; cottage camps are springing up every where; and people are traveling with trailers to insure housing for themselves. New projects must be developed and, where natural surroundings are not particularly inviting, special accommodations, better cottages, or more space per person should be provided to draw people away from present popular resorts. In short, we need more co-ordination in planning.

A GENERAL PLANNING PROGRAM

There are a number of important points to be considered about the general plan of a resort before planning the individual buildings, such as selection of a site, determining the possible size, choosing a style, and providing for the financing.

The selection of a site, unless only one location is available, is an important consideration. Land bordering on lakes or along large rivers is especially desirable and not as hard to develop as general areas. A resort located near a national or a state park has an advantage because of publicity. Historic or legendary background can make an otherwise plain site inviting, such as the numerous taverns in New England. Even open, unforested land may be utilized by appealing to romantic individuals as is done in the western dude ranch. Aside from the natural beauties of a site there are other geographic points to consider. First, the site should not be too far away from the larger population centers unless it is near rapid train service or unless it caters to people with longer vacations. Second, the site should be ac-

cessible from a through highway rather than be located at the end of the road. People traveling today like to go and to return by different routes or to stop on the way, so that while perhaps it is better for a resort to be in a secluded spot just off the highway, it is more apt to be successful if people do not have to travel a great distance to reach it. Third, it is better if possible to choose a site in hilly or rolling country, or where the road winds, since all these features tend to slow up the traveler and give him a chance to see the resort. Hills, moreover, provide more types of recreation, such as golf, riding, and hiking. Not only are the vistas better in hilly country, but it is generally easier to secure good sanitary conditions. Fourth, if at all possible the resort should be among trees or in forested sections. Trees give the shade necessary during summer heat and usually mean that some water is available.

After the selection of a site the next step is to decide on the scope of the project. The size of the resort should be determined and limited finances should not stop preparing for possible additions. In addition to housing and possibly dining facilities, one should allow for playgrounds for children, recreational grounds for adults, golf

links, tennis courts, space for dancing and indoor amusements, and, if the resort is any distance from a city, trading centers. In smaller resorts some of these features may be combined at first, such as a dining hall being used for dancing, but one should allow space for adding separate buildings later.

Next a style of building should be decided on, especially as to exterior treatment, so that the structures will be uniform and in keeping with local surroundings or historical background. Noteworthy examples of historical styling are found in Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona, in which the Indian pueblo motive is used. Examples of harmony with the local surroundings are found in most of our national parks, particularly at Grand Canyon and Yellowstone National Parks. The traditional log construction, representing primitive building, is found everywhere but it should be varied with local precedent. Since so called "modern" architecture has little historic or legendary background it is better suited to seaside resorts or places not caring for tradition. Most of the good examples in design have been built in the last twenty years. Early resorts were built following popular fads, and when additions were required no attempt was made to match the

styles. Examples of poorly executed resort building can be found everywhere, such as an Aztec Indian lodge in northern Minnesota. The owner of a planned resort has a wonderful opportunity to overcome awkward appearances by harmonizing a group of buildings and making them fit into their surroundings.

Having chosen a site, allowed for the extent and possible contents of the resort, and selected a style of building one can determine the actual plan. By plan I mean the grand plan or all the units together with the grounds, roads, and walks. If the project is large and will require several years to finish, or perhaps if finances are limited and the proceeds of one unit will be used to help build others, the most important unit should be laid out first, with care being taken that the building of future units will not interfere with the view or accessibility of the first building. Sanitation, however, should if possible be made adequate for additional buildings since enlargements would require new parts, and since the extra work would be neither convenient nor pleasant.

AN EXAMPLE OF A PLANNED RESORT

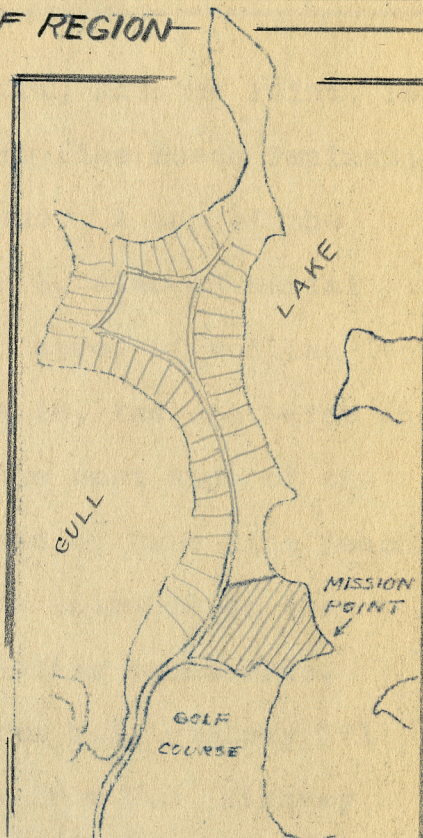
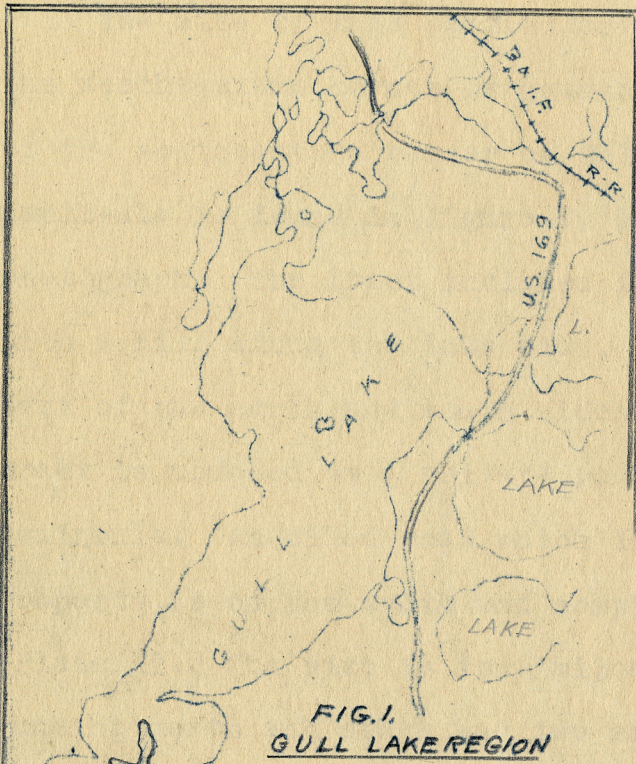
As an example I am taking the resort at Mission Point on Gull Lake near Brainerd, Minnesota. I helped plan this resort for the Pine Beach Corporation with the collaboration of Mr. W. J. Madden, Jr., one of the proprietors.

Before discussing the site itself it may be well to describe briefly the surrounding country. Gull lake is in the heart of the lake resort country for which Minnesota is famous. Located in the pine forest region, the scene of the early lumbering industry, it has numerous islands and nearly 150 miles of heavily wooded shore line. One of the main north and south highways skirts the northeastern shore of the lake, and one of the principal east and west highways passes near the southwestern corner. Brainerd is the nearest city that may be reached by train and is about twelve miles from the southern end of Gull Lake. There is also an airport on the southern edge of the lake. A map of the Gull Lake region is found in Figure 1, Plate I.

Plate I.

Maps and Photograph of Gull Lake Region

PLATE-I-MAPS AND PHOTO OF REGION



AERIAL PHOTO BELOW

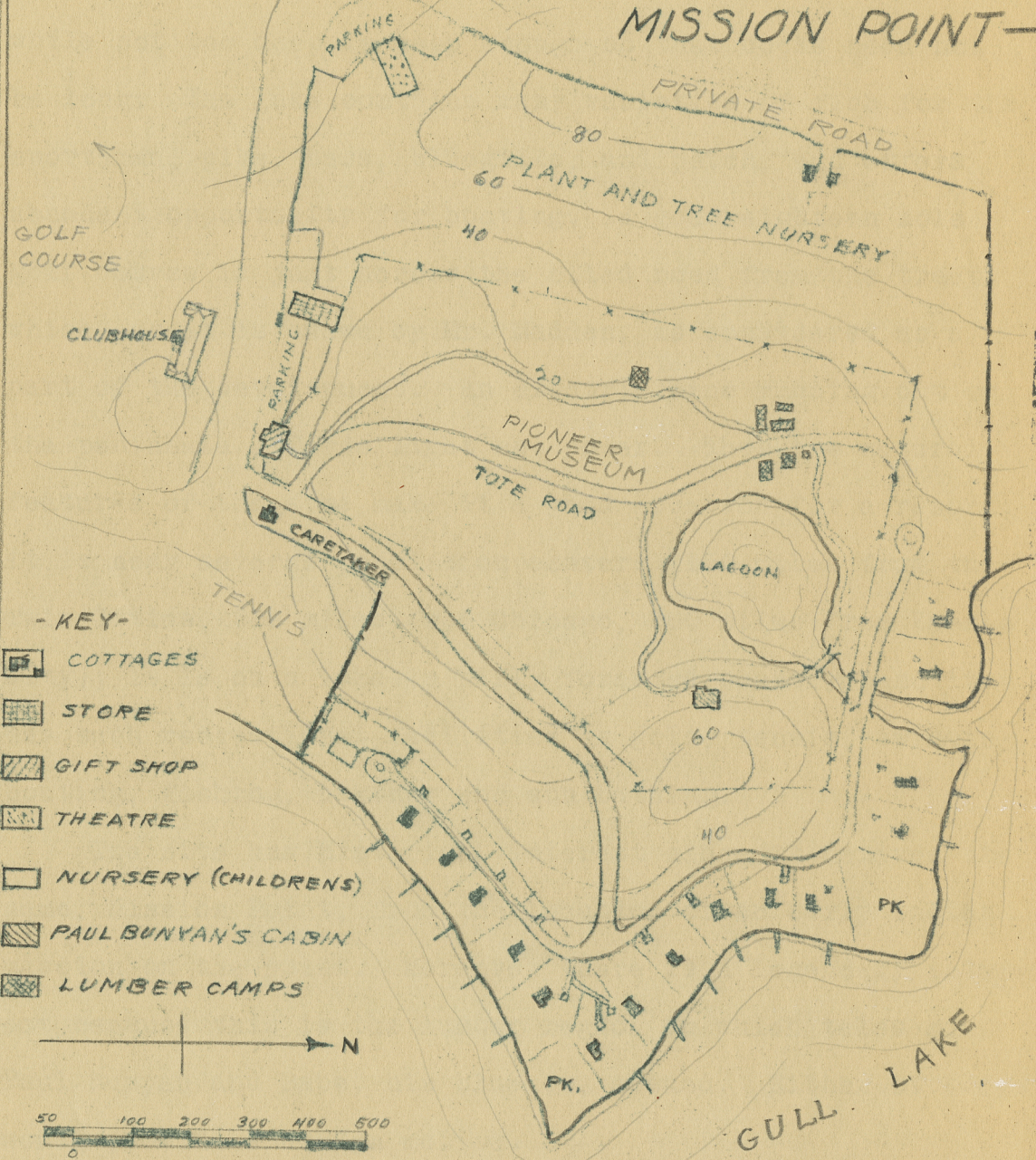


The site of this particular resort, Mission Point, is the southeastern corner or entrance to Pine Beach Peninsula at the southeastern corner of Gull Lake. A map of the peninsula is found in Figure 2, Plate I, also an aerial photograph. The tract includes forty acres of rolling land with a hill along the lake side, that is, the east side and part of the north and south sides. The west side of the tract is bounded by a private road leading into Pine Beach Peninsula. An oiled road which is the entrance to the property is on the south and completes its boundaries. (Plate II.) The site is four miles from U.S. Highway 371 running north and south and two miles from U.S. Highway 210 running east and west. There is a low grassy flat, a former swamp, in the center of the tract while the rest of it is covered with trees including Norway pine, white pine, birch, oak, and willows. Since the site is on a point there is a good view in all directions, and cool breezes from the lake keep the air comfortable and invigorating.

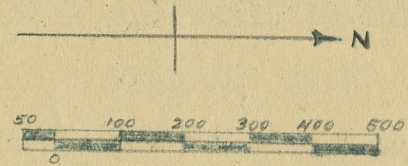
Plate II.

The Site of Mission Point

PLATE-II SITE OF MISSION POINT-

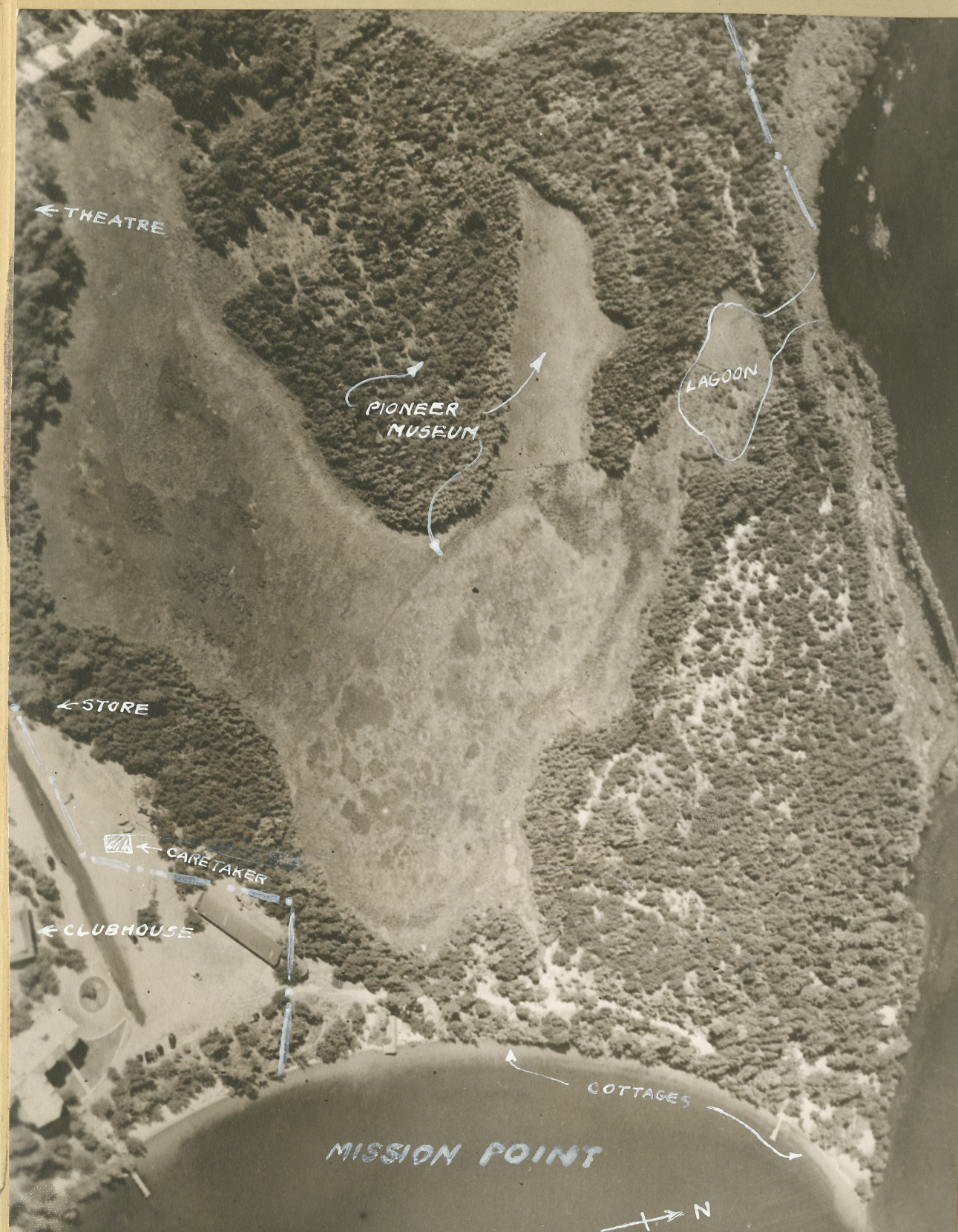


- KEY -
- COTTAGES
 - STORE
 - GIFT SHOP
 - THEATRE
 - NURSERY (CHILDRENS)
 - PAUL BUNYAN'S CABIN
 - LUMBER CAMPS



CONTOURS ARE FIGURED
ABOVE LAKE LEVEL

RIGHT, AERIAL PHOTO OF SITE



There is a good sand beach for swimming and the water while not too deep is deep enough so that docks need not be long. The lake contains many varieties of fish for the sportsman; pike, bass, bluegills, and perch, and offers abundant opportunity for boating. A good eighteen hole golf course is just across the oiled road from the tract which, as it is owned by Mr. Madden, is considered as a part of the development. An electric line running out on the peninsula affords light and power. Thus the natural features of the site make it a good location for a resort; it is near several population centers (150 miles from the Twin Cities, 500 miles from Chicago, 600 miles from Kansas City); it is on a lake in hilly forested country; and it has such recreational facilities as golf, tennis, swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, and sun bathing.

The site has historical interest since it derives its name, Mission Point, from the location of an early Indian mission on the point. Moreover there is a legendary interest because this is the lumber region in which tales of Paul Bunyan and Babe, his blue ox, abound. Either of these would provide a design motive.

With the site established and a background in mind we

were ready to start the general plan. Mr. Madden first itemized the units he hoped to incorporate into the development and made a sketch of the tract showing the location of all buildings and the roads and paths connecting them. The scheme in detail was to use the land bordering the lake for large cottages accommodating eight to ten people, or six people and their servants, and to allow the hill to separate these cottages from the rest of the development. The point itself was to be left as a park or community center for the cottages, with some form of commemoration to the Indian mission to be added later.

Continuing the scheme we plan to complete the draining of the former swamp by dredging a portion of it on the north and by connecting it with the lake, thus forming a lagoon. The former swamp is to be turned into a museum of pioneer lumber days by the construction of several genuine logging sheds and equipment. Two lumber camps are planned, one an old time lean-to shelter of the 1860's and the other a larger camp of the boom period, to be complete in every detail including bunk-houses, cook shack, blacksmith shop, stables, time keepers office, and even the "tote" road. A Paul Bunyan cabin will be built with enlarged propor-

overnight guests from crowded cottages, and for people staying a short time for golf tournaments. There will be

tions, extra size doors, windows, and furnishings bringing out the legends of the giant of the north woods. All the log camps and paraphernalia will be on lower ground, and more or less hidden by trees; they will be surrounded by a high wire fence, set back in the trees to be inconspicuous, and wild animal life will be introduced to make the setting primitive as possible. The lagoon will be used for ducks and beaver.

To enter and leave the museum people will pass through the gift shop and tea room where guides will meet them and explain the features of the camps. This gift shop entrance is to be on the south side of the grounds across the road from the golf course and club house. A small store and filling station is planned near the gift shop with parking space between them. Since there is no evening entertainment other than dancing in the immediate vicinity and the nearest town is twelve miles away, a 400 seat theatre will be built on the southeast corner at the junction of the main road into the resort and the private road up the peninsula. Also included in the plan is a thirty room addition to the present club house of the golf course. This will not be a hotel in any sense as it will be used for overnight guests from crowded cottages, and for people staying a short time for golf tournaments. There will be

a dining room to accommodate sixty or seventy persons on the ground floor of the addition. A nursery with an adjacent playground is planned to make it easier for people with families to play golf, fish, swim, or otherwise enjoy themselves without worrying about the safety of their children. The possibility of a livery stable for saddle horses is allowed for and a place is set aside for it.

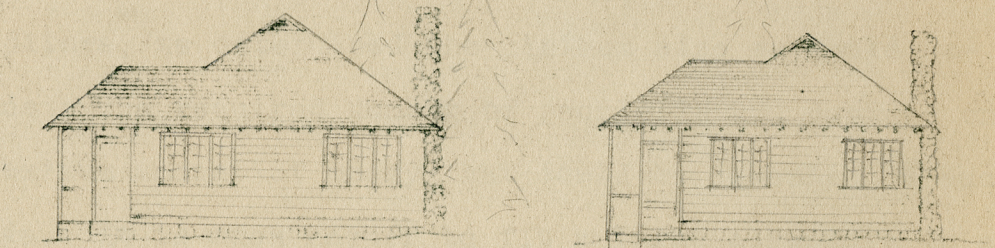
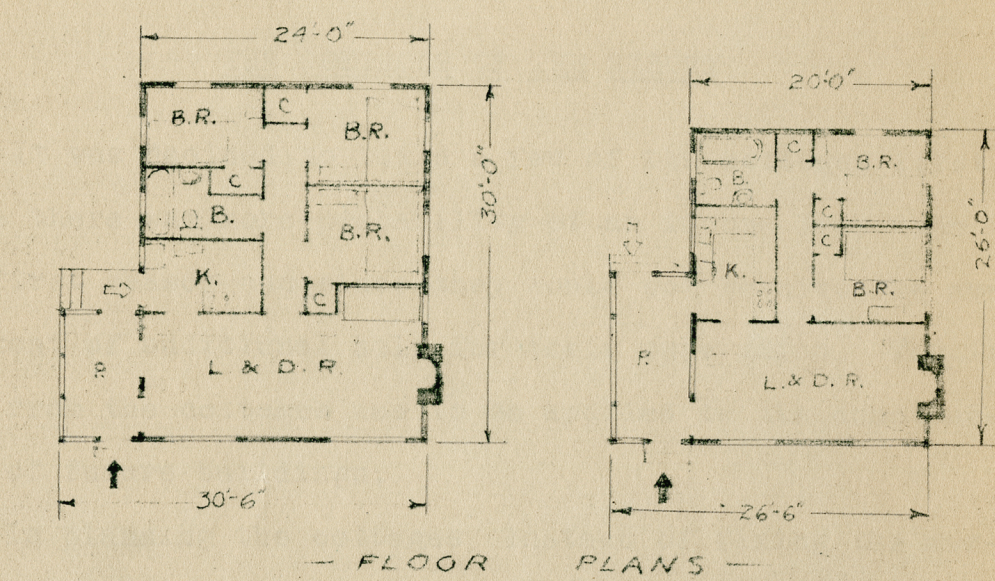
For the larger buildings the exterior treatment decided on was rough-sawn lap siding in wide widths stained a weathered brown, green shingle roofs, and rustic log trim. Knotty pine paneling was the interior motive decided on. The log camps, of course, will be built in keeping with their early construction.

In order to have the corporation vote funds for the project preliminary drawings, showing the principal floor plans and two elevations, were made of all the buildings contemplated. A complete map of the development was also presented. The map with an aerial photograph of the site is shown on Plate II and the preliminary drawings are shown on Plate III. As these preliminary drawings were accepted with only a few minor changes, work was started almost immediately.

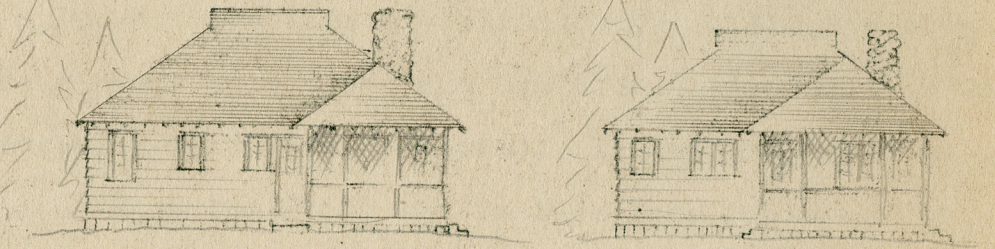
Plate III.

Preliminary Drawings

Resort at Mission Point



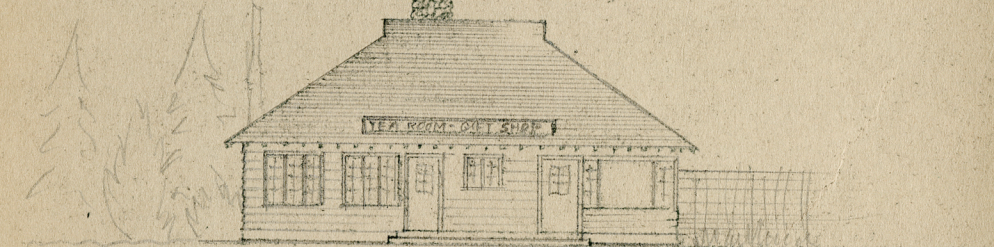
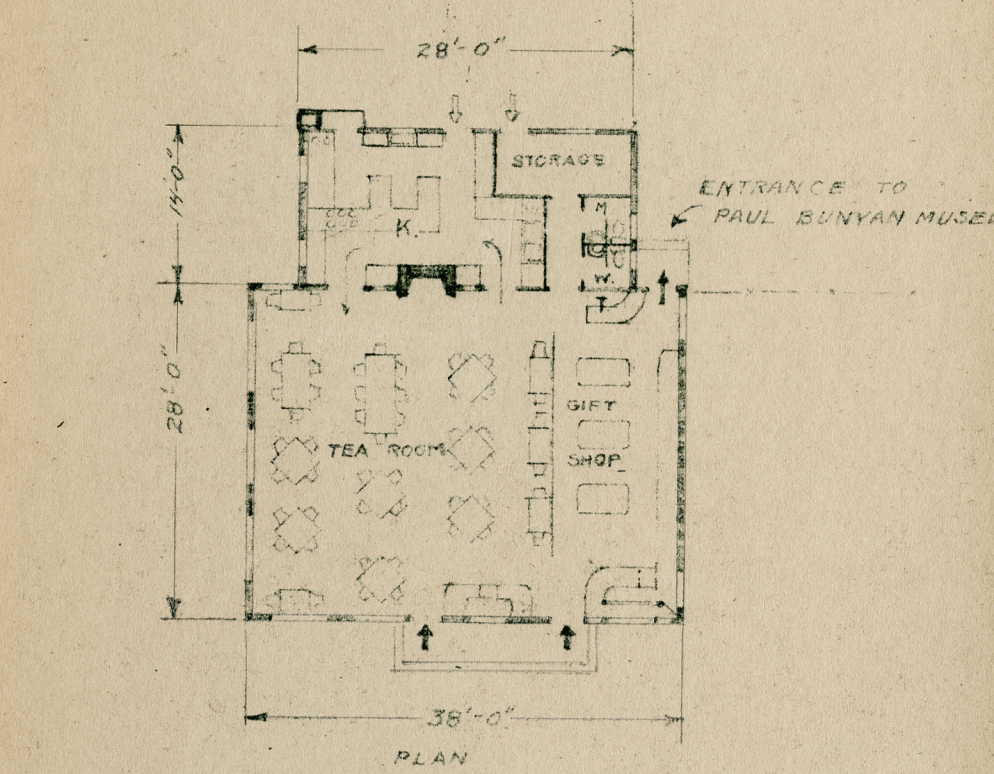
ELEVATIONS FROM LAKE



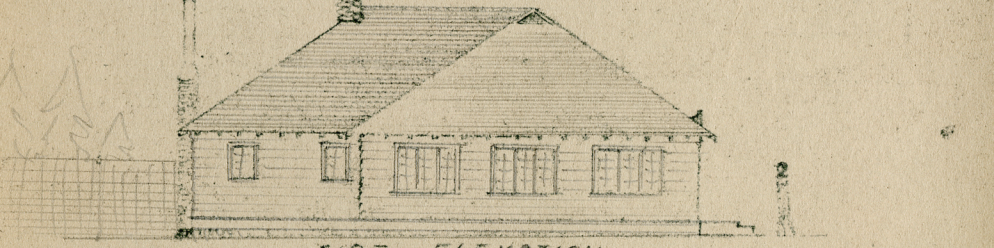
ELEVATIONS FROM SIDE

3 BED ROOM 2 BED ROOM

LAKE SHORE COTTAGES

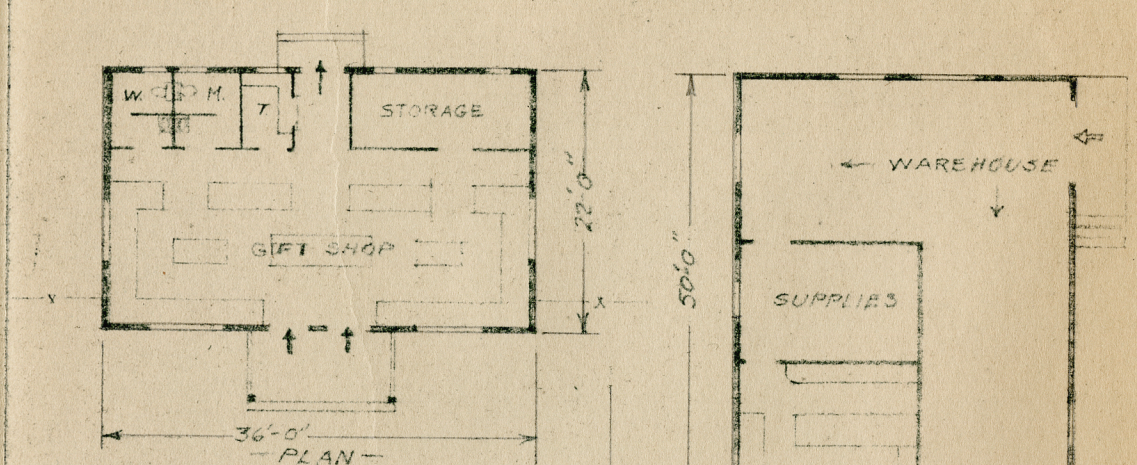


ELEVATION FROM ROAD

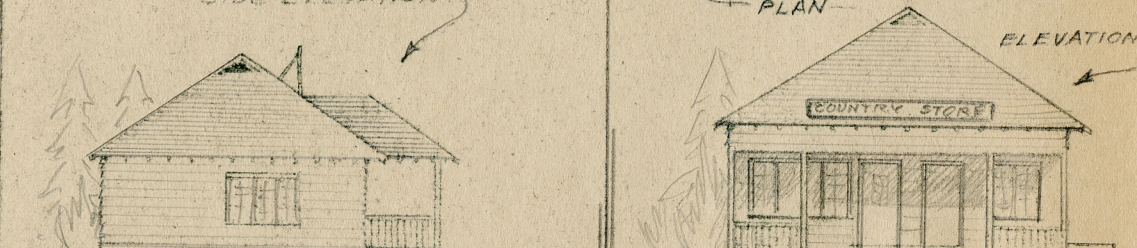


SIDE ELEVATION

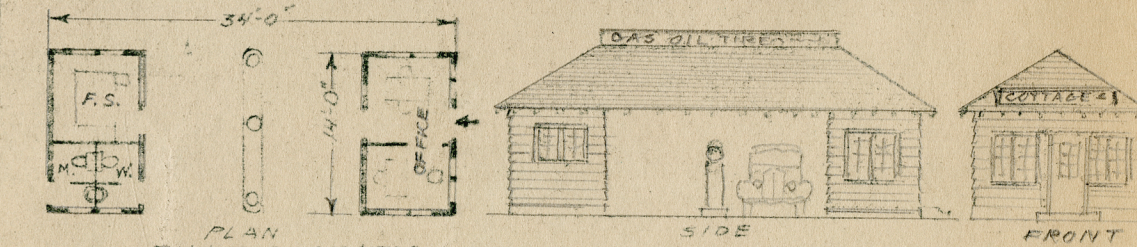
TEA ROOM & GIFT-SHOP-ENTRANCE COMBINED



ELEVATION FROM ROAD

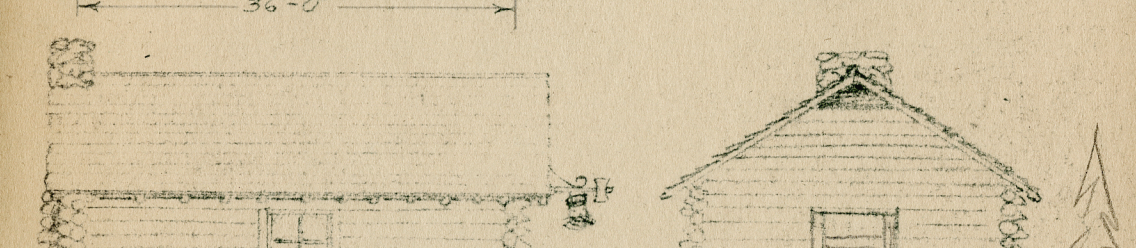
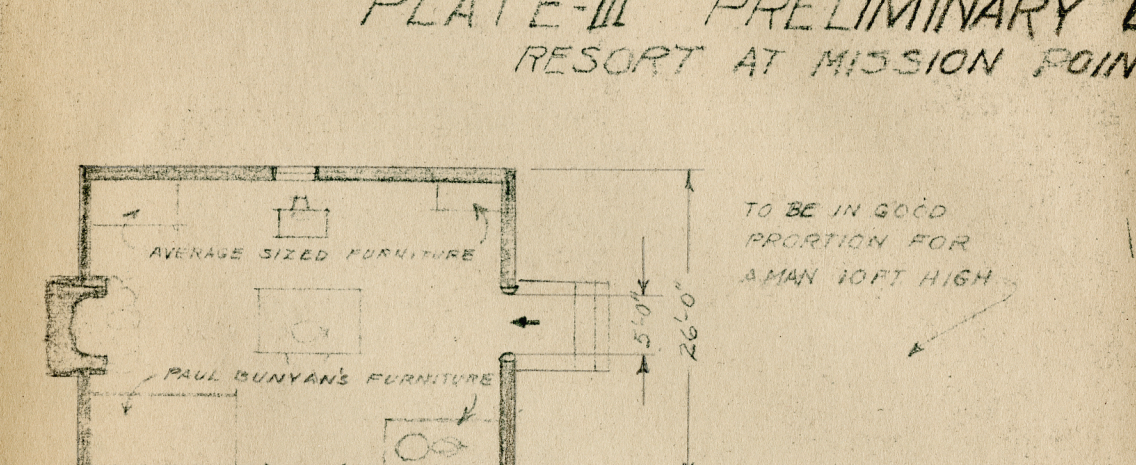


SIDE ELEVATION

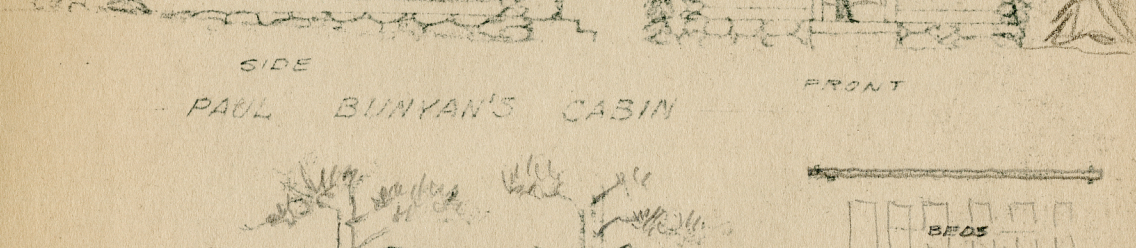


PLAN FILLING STATION WITH OFFICES FOR COTTAGES

VARIOUS COMBINATIONS OF ENTERPRISES



SIDE FRONT



PLAN

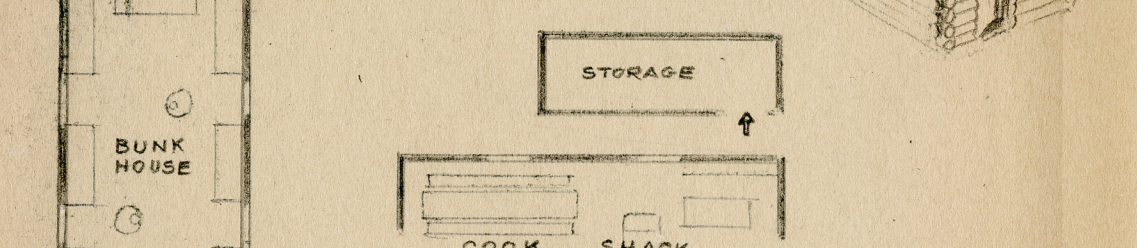


PLAN

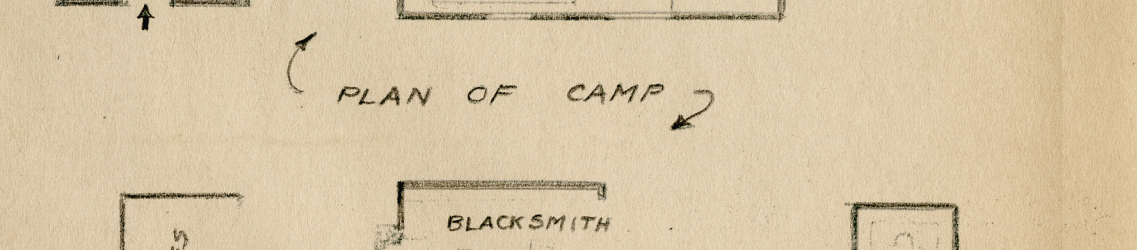
PARTS OF THE PIONEER MUSEUM



BIRD'S EYE VIEW LOGGING CAMP

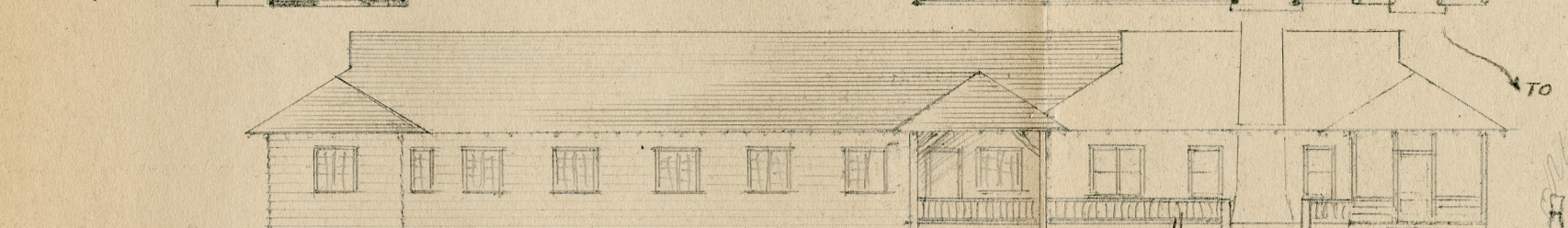
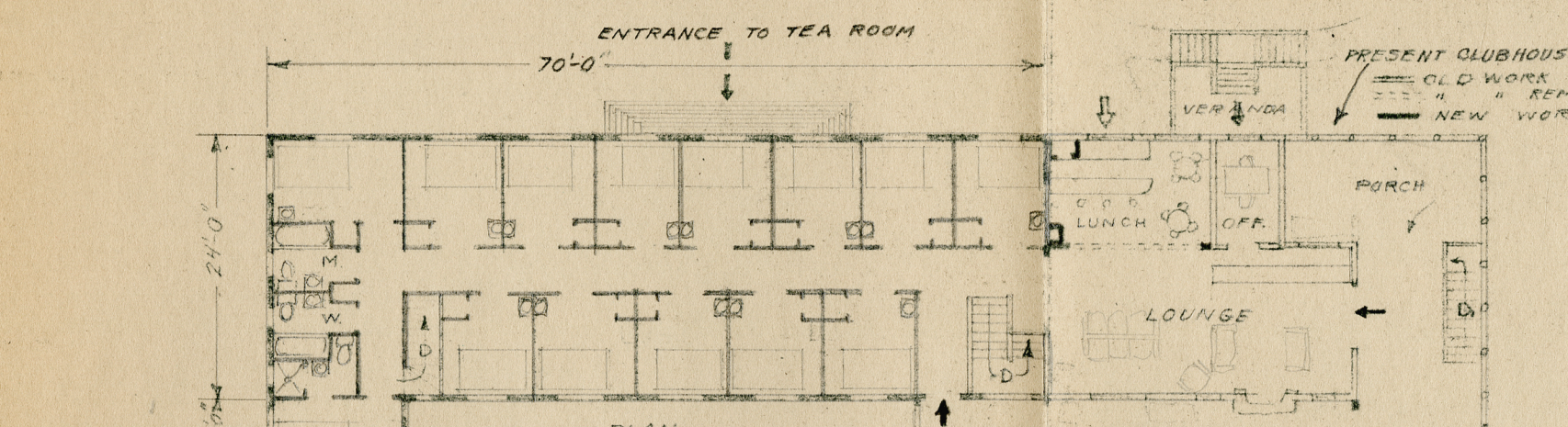


PLAN OF CAMP



PLAN

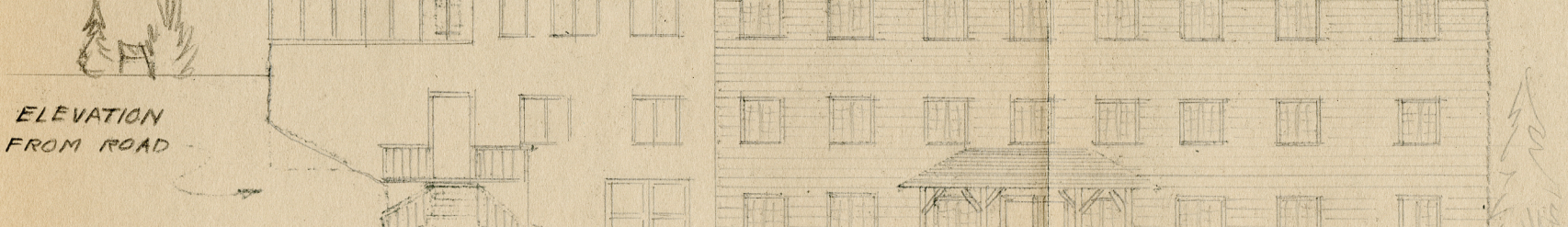
PARTS OF PIONEER MUSEUM



ELEVATION FROM GOLF COURSE

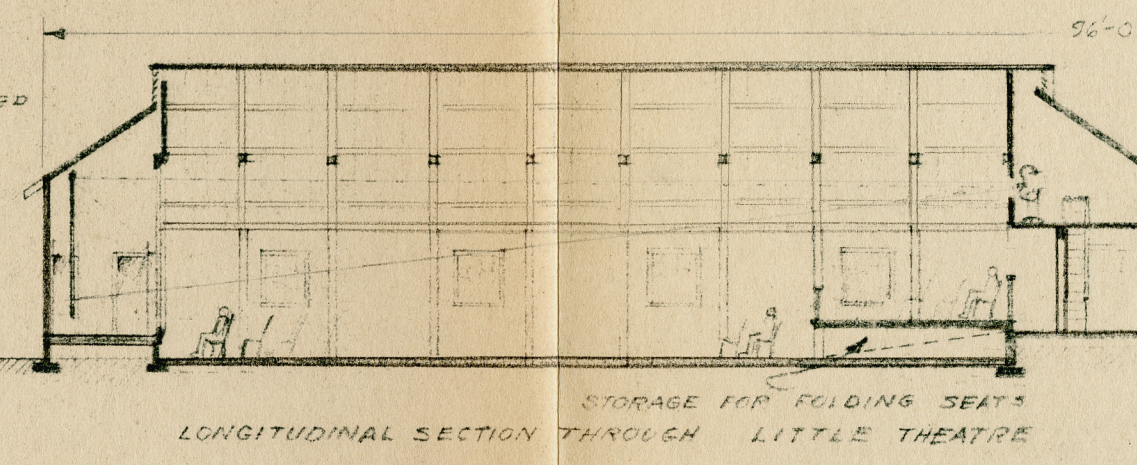


ELEVATION FROM ROAD

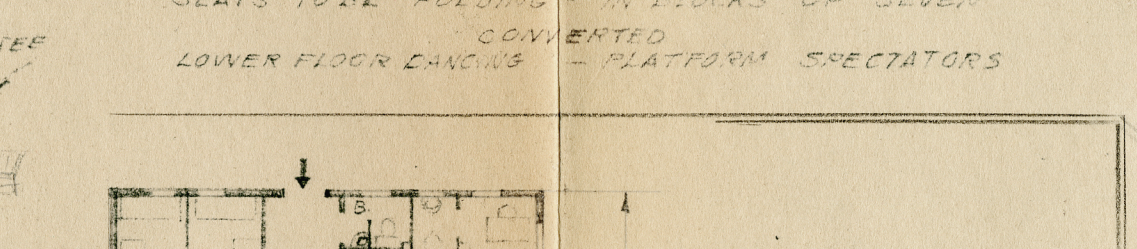


ELEVATION FROM ROAD

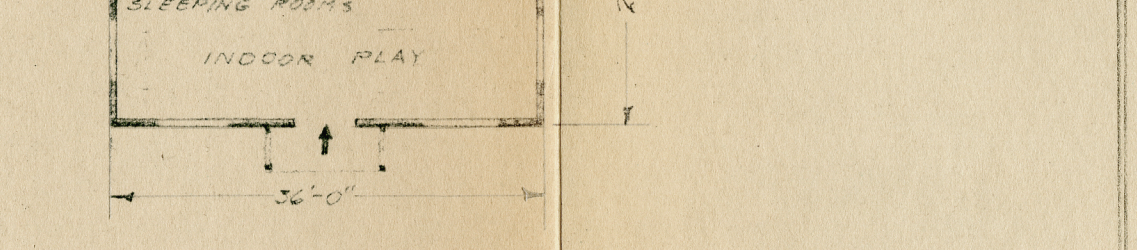
30 ROOM ADDITION TO CLUB HOUSE (OLD BUILDING IN OUTLINE)



LONGITUDINAL SECTION THROUGH LITTLE THEATRE



PLAN OF LOBBY



PLAN

NURSERY

ELEVATIONS ARE SAME AS GIFT-SHOP-ENTRANCE

SCALE (ALL DRAWINGS) 1/8" = 1'-0"

PRELIMINARY DRAWINGS

RESORT AT MISSION POINT

LEO, 1935 CHAS. L. BRAINARD

THE COTTAGES OF THE RESORT

It was decided to build a few of the cottages first, since there was more probability of an income from them the first season and since they would not require the employment of additional help for their operation. The income from the cottages was to be applied to the construction of future buildings.

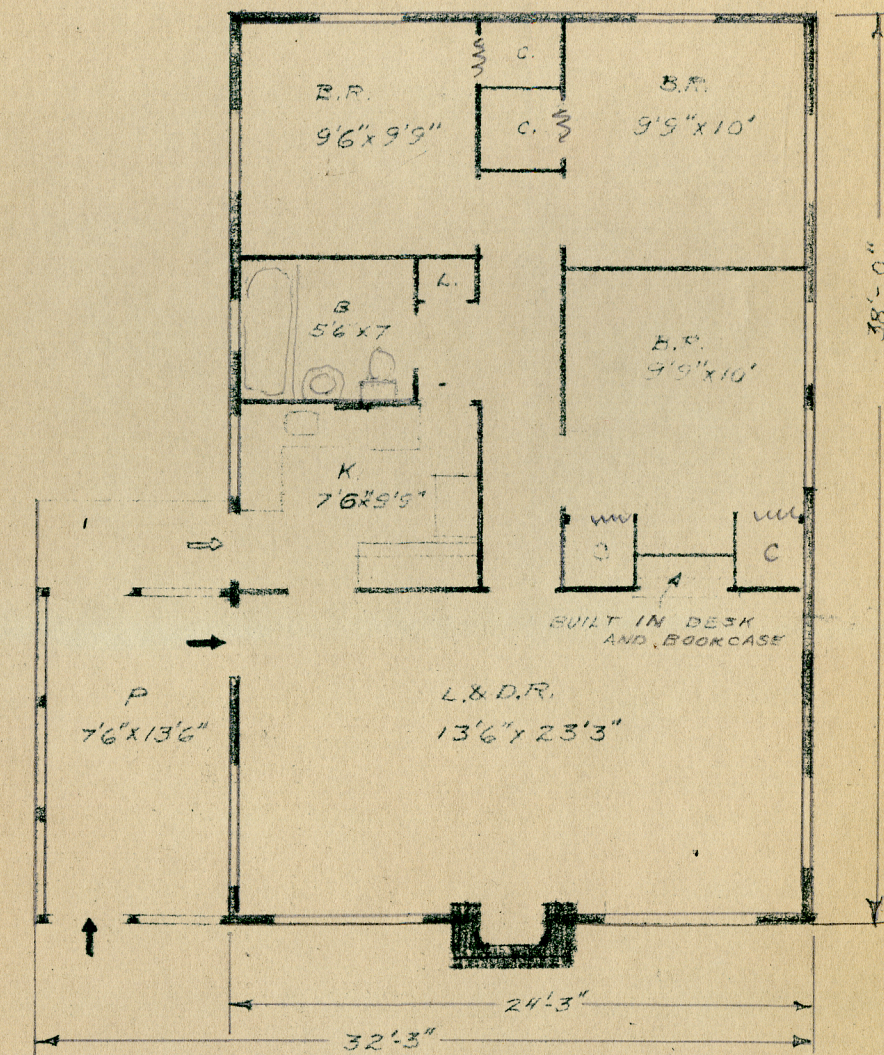
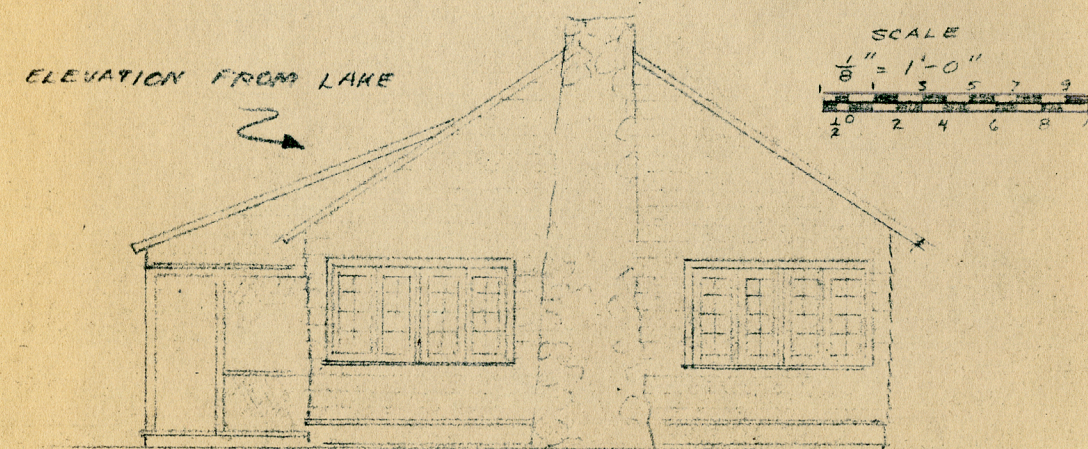
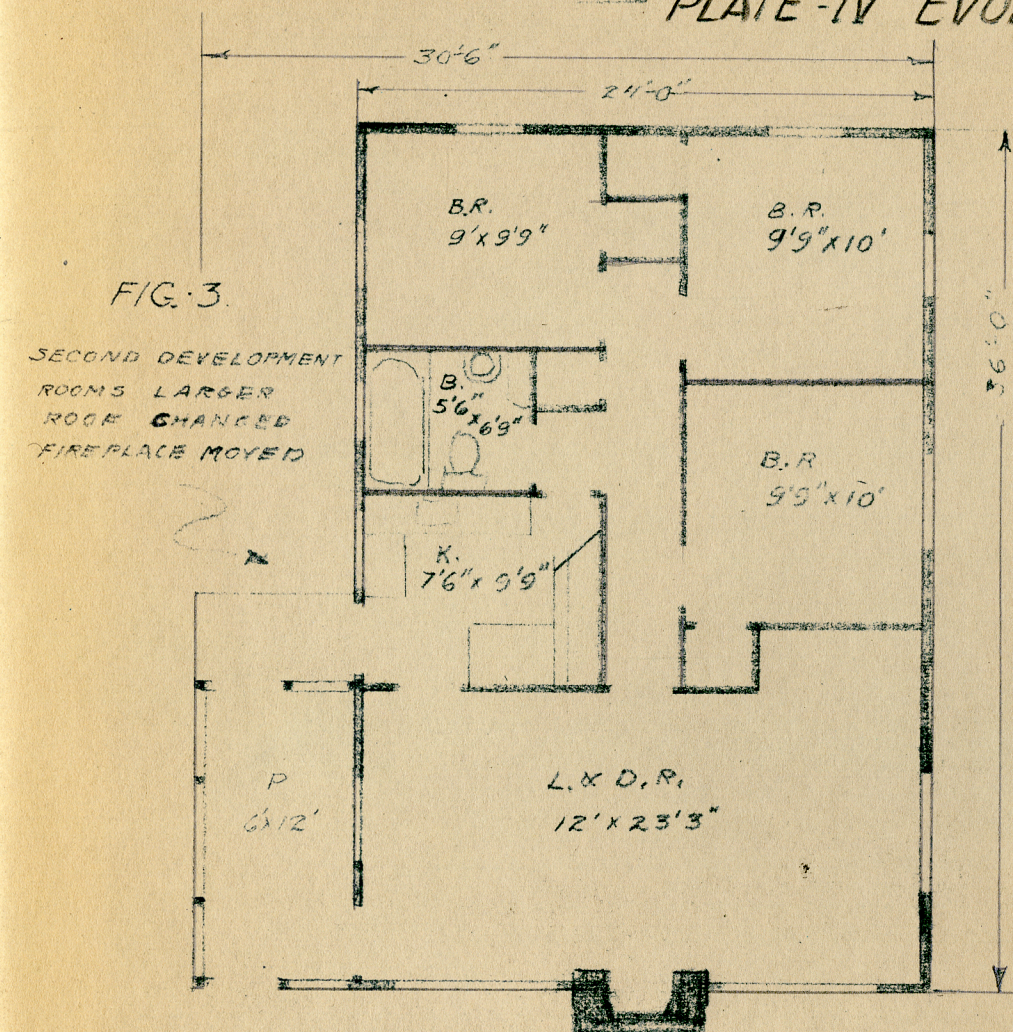
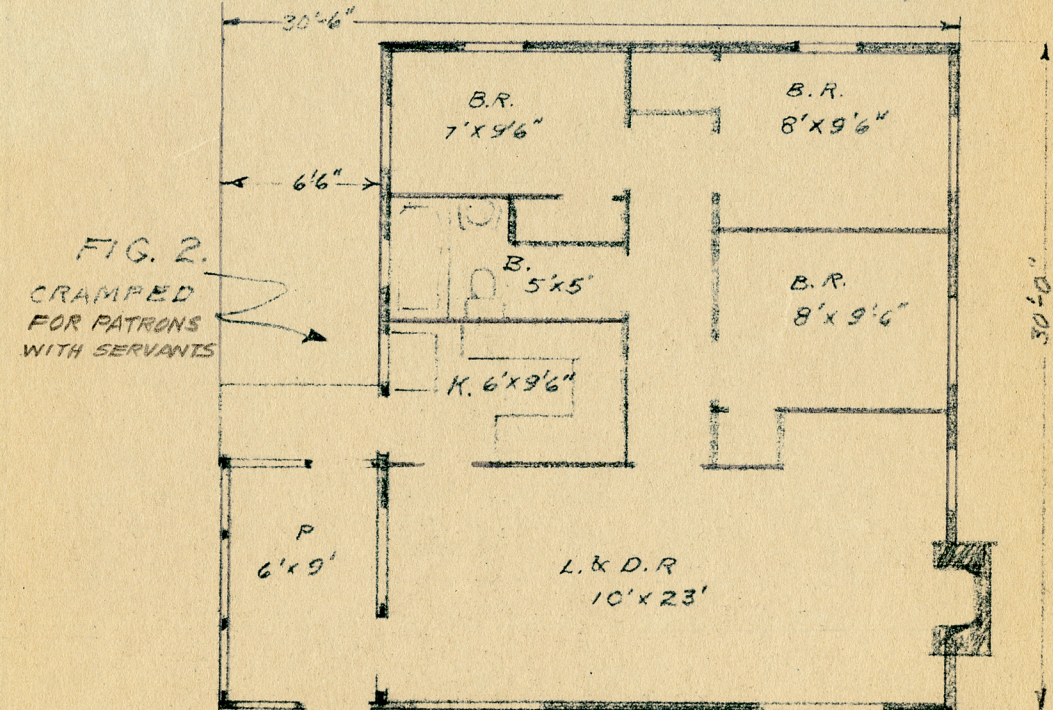
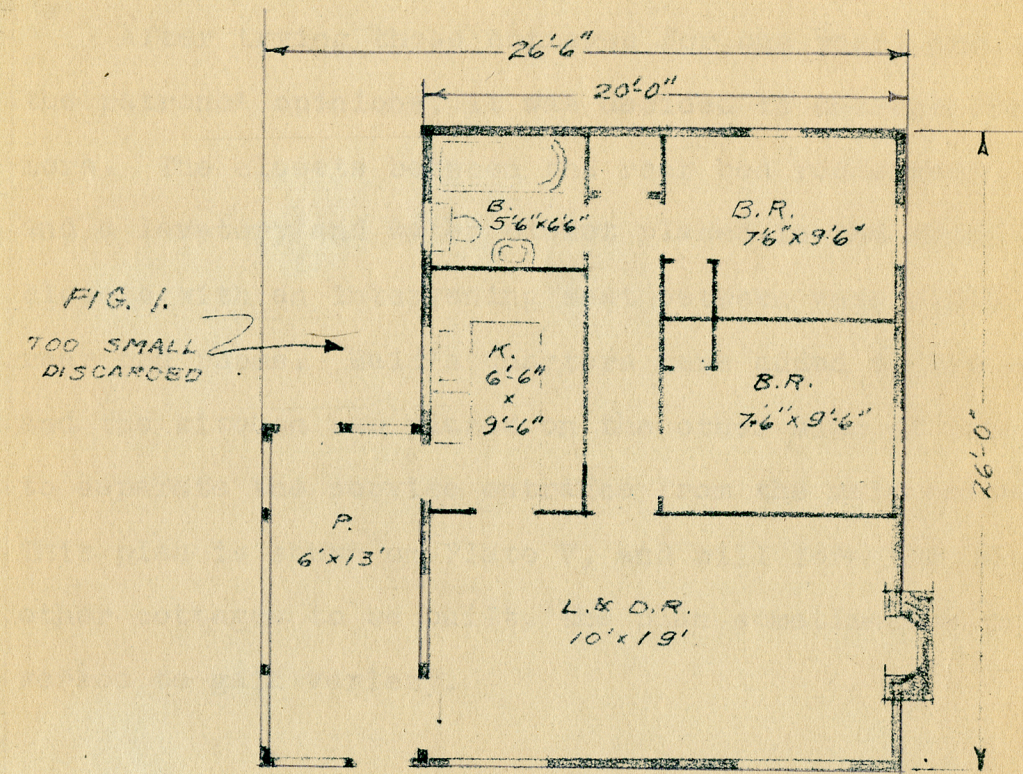
In planning the cottages, instead of fixing the maximum size of the dwelling desired together with a minimum expenditure, we determined the minimum size we could accommodate the required number of people in and decided on the maximum amount of money that could be invested in each cottage. It is much harder to fit a large structure to a small investment than to find the smallest usable plan to match a larger investment. Consequently, after the minimum size plans were drawn and the cost estimated, the cost was far below the maximum allowed. In this way we were able to enlarge the rooms and include more features for comfort and convenience than we felt were absolutely necessary. The plans were enlarged twice before the amount previously allowed was reached.

The stages in the development of the plans are shown on Plate IV. The small cottage in Figure 1 was discarded because it was considered too uncomfortable for the type of people being catered to. The plan of Figure 2 was considered the minimum comfortable size, although not spacious, but the cost was still less than allowed. In Figure 3 the rooms were enlarged to accommodate twin beds in the two bed rooms, and more closet space was provided. Figure 4 was the plan of the first two cottages as they were built with the bed nook in the living room removed and a built-in desk inserted in its place, this plan also provided more closet space. The cost, when the cottages were built, came within two hundred dollars of the estimated costs, including furnishings and a two-car garage. The cottages were built with independent water and sewage systems so that they might be sold separately.

Plate IV.

Evolution of Cottage Plans

— PLATE-IV EVOLUTION OF COTTAGE PLANS —



RIGHT ABOVE, ELEVATION FROM LAKE, BELOW, FROM SIDE.
(THE COTTAGE IN THESE PHOTOS HAS PLAN REVERSE)

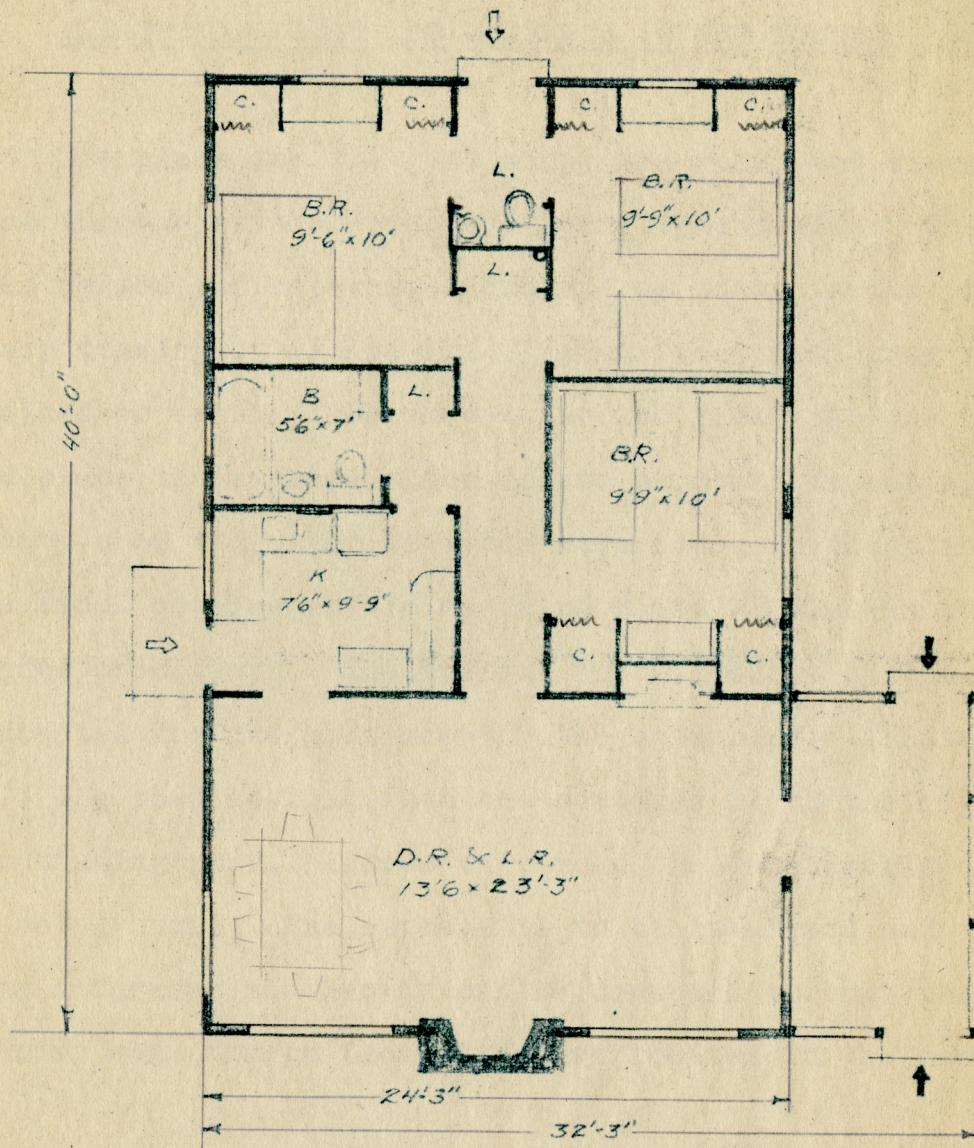


After trying these cottages for one year, and asking the patrons' opinions, it was decided to enlarge them still more. The closets between the rear bed rooms were combined and a lavatory and water closet placed in the room. Twin closets with an intervening seat between were added to the rear bed rooms. Maid's quarters were added to the garage and the kitchen was placed on the other side of the plan to separate the service entrance from the main entrance. This plan is shown on Plate V, and will form the basis for other cottages to be built, the plan sometimes being reversed to gain variety.

Plate V.

The New Cottage Plan

PLATE-V NEW COTTAGE PLAN



FINAL PLAN FOR COTTAGES-1937

EXTRA LAVATORY ADDED AND SERVICE ENTRANCE
ON OPPOSITE SIDE

SCALE $\frac{1}{8}" = 1'-0"$

THE TRADING POST AND ENTRANCE TO THE MUSEUM

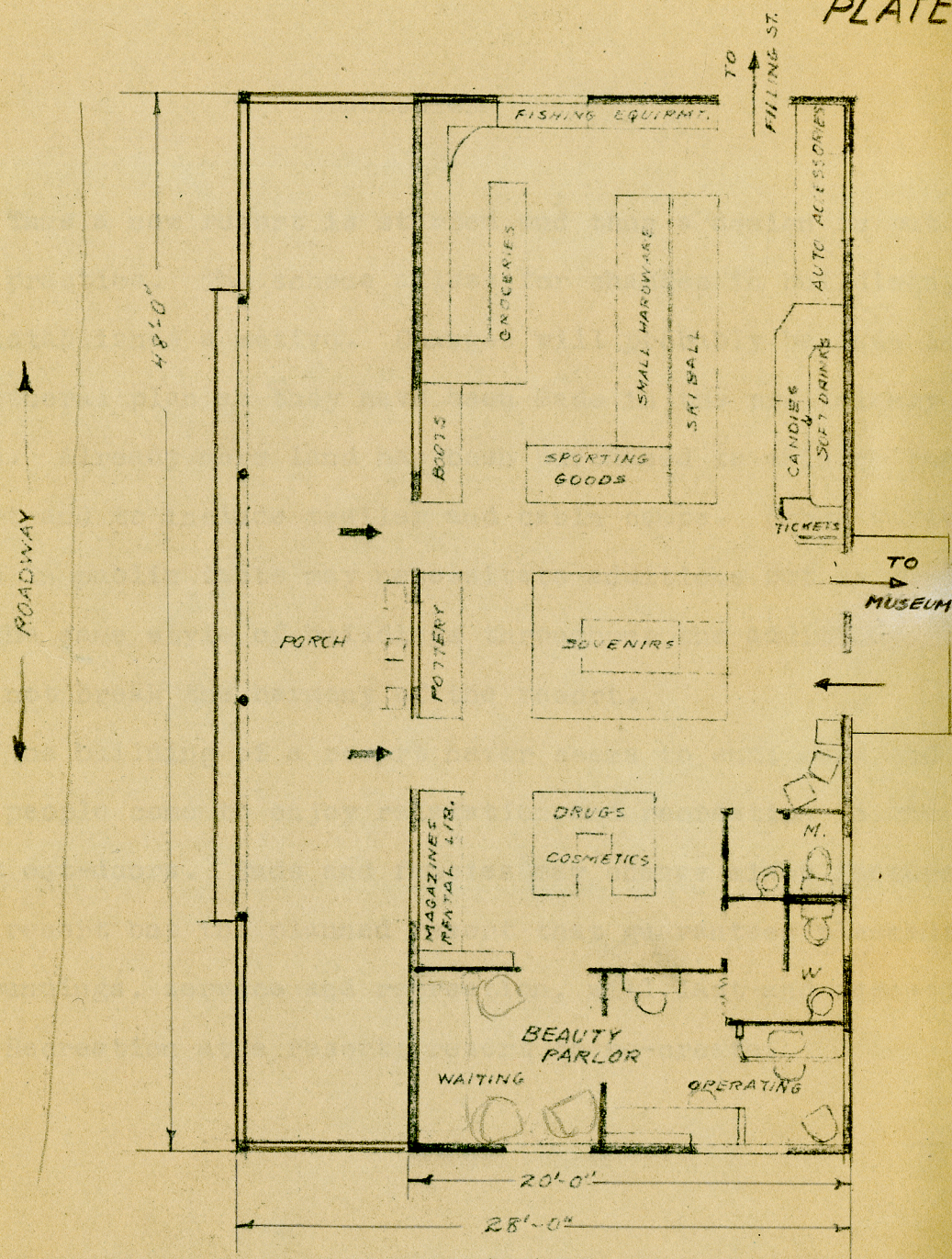
The plans for the gift shop, tea room, and store have gone through several stages of development also. The first plan called for separate buildings as shown in the preliminary drawings. (Plate III). After the first year it was decided to combine all except the tea room into one building and place the storage space in the caretaker's cottage. A beauty shop and other services were added to the plan and the final development is shown on Plate VI also in the appended photograph. The trading post is built on the spot indicated for the gift shop on the site plan. (Plate II).

The road leading into the cottages is to the right of the trading post. Across this road the caretaker's cottage is being built. The cottage is to be insulated and will have a furnace so that it can be occupied through the winter. Laundry and storage facilities are located in the basement.

Plate VI.

The Trading Post

PLATE VI. TRADING POST



PARKING AND
ENTRANCE TO COTTAGES →

SCALE $\frac{1}{8}" = 1'-0"$



THE TRADING POST NEAR COMPLETION

CONCLUSION

Thus a new resort is started and thus a design is put into practice. The scheme allows for changes in buildings, and establishes a motive. Changes will probably be made in the general plan as they have been made in the preliminary plans. Already more land has been purchased to enlarge the resort and to include trailer and cabin camps. Other variations in public taste may necessitate additions but by keeping the same style of buildings throughout the additions will not break the harmony of the resort.

The building of a resort never seems to end; more and more people come to enjoy relaxation and recreation in the great out-doors. Fads and fancies may change minor features of a resort but the planned resort that guarantees pleasant surroundings, service and recreation, will last and succeed.

Recreation at a resort; resort to re-create.

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